



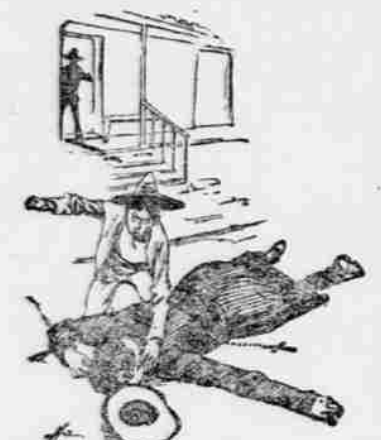
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PART I.

The sheep were in the folds on the mesa. The bronzed shepherds of El Rito had eaten their tortillas and chili con carne, smoked their corn husk cigarettes, spread their cushions on the floors of their huts, devoutly said their prayers and gone to sleep.

The faithful sentinels that guarded the sheepfolds were all sleeping, but with one eye open and one ear cocked; no prowling coyote might hope to enter the loosely constructed corral and snatch a weak lambkin, for the sentinels were keen, their courage above suspicion, and their intelligence but little less than human. Man is not so utterly faithful to his trust as the shepherd dog.

It was a night in early spring. The heavens were radiant with stars. The air was soft, and laden with the fragrance of the springing sage. Each star shone with a brilliancy that would have rivaled that blazing forerunner of the seven seas—lightning. The scene was fairly as would a crescent moon in a less clear and tranquil atmosphere. And in this glorious starlight hovered the spirits of peace and content. Here were a people, patient in poverty, happy in ignorance and as pious as those amongst whom dwelt the Virgin that brought forth a Messiah.

The moon toward El Rito was in darkness, save for a single light that shone from a window in the house of the good priest, Padre Ramon. It was 10 o'clock, so there was none to see the light nor remark



Pedro Tried to Rescue the Unconscious Priest.

the unusually hour kept by the spiritual pastor of a flock as meek and gentle as the white herds in the sheepfolds. The good priest was alone, he sat with bowed head beside a table and pressed his hands against his brow. There was a look of suffering upon his handsome, clean-shaven face; his eyes, which had ever looked with gentleness upon his people, were now wide and staring; he was as one in pain. But Padre Ramon suffered no physical pain; he was mentally and sick at heart. Nature had no mercy; the alchemist seeking to chain his troubled mind or stop the ache within his breast.

Manuel Salazar (that was Padre Ramon's name) was born for the world; fate gave him the church. He had all the physical graces and many accomplishments that excite the admiration and win the love of women. He was a strong, passionate nature, but the fires of his blood were held in check by the cool currents of his mind. Twenty years had passed since Manuel Salazar had presented himself to the provincial and craved admittance to the Society of Jesus, during those twenty years Loyola had no more devoted disciple. Manuel's desire to be a Jesuit was not the result of a devotional spirit, but rather that he might by service to the church and the holy order redeem himself from an excessive world fate had darkened and saddened.

When a youth of eighteen he was betrothed to Alicia de Vargas, whose father's large estate was adjacent to that of Manuel's father, in Southern New Mexico. She was in every respect worthy to be his bride; she had beauty, health and culture, and together with an only brother two years her senior would inherit the acres and vast herds of Don Antonio de Vargas. Alicia's life had been lived outside of towns and cities, so that her purity had not been tarnished, nor her simplicity lessened by contact with aggregated humanity. Her ancestry dated back to the Conquest, and in her veins flowed the sanguine and of Castile.

The Salazars had sought of which to be adorned; their blood, also, was blue and their wealth great. Don Diego Salazar looked forward with pride to the union that was to link his honored family name with the ancient one of de Vargas, while Don Antonio regarded Manuel as the most eligible of sons-in-law. The marriage was never celebrated.

One evening a week previous to the date set for the wedding, Manuel accompanied by Enrique de Vargas, Alicia's brother, rode to the town near by to complete some arrangements for the approaching festivities. They separated early in the evening, making an agreement to meet at 10 o'clock in the plaza, where they had left their horses. Enrique was not there at the appointed time. He had many friends in the town, and Manuel took it for granted that he had been unavoidably detained by some of them. After waiting nearly an hour, Manuel went in search of his tardy companion. To all of his inquiries there was the same answer; no one had seen Enrique since early in the evening when he had ridden into town.

Manuel's worst fears were realized. It was midnight when he found Enrique in a gaming house. The youthful son of the house of de Vargas had the seat of honor, opposite the dealer, while smaller players crowded around him. There was a glow on Enrique's flushed face as he placed his money on a queen, the opposite card being a jack. The monte dealer began to slowly draw the cards one by one from the pack in his hands. Enrique called out each card as it fell upon the table; his voice was thick but defiant. It was at once apparent to Manuel that Enrique was drunk, and in an ugly mood; he had been losing, and was exasperated almost to madness.

"Jack," called the dealer, showing the card, and taking the money Enrique had staked.

"Show me the queen," cried Enrique angrily, as he arose and pushed back several of the players on either hand. "There was a queen in the first layout and it was now show me the other one."

"Does the señor think?" began the gambler, but Enrique cut him short. "Never mind what I think, show me the queen," said Enrique. His eyes glittered with rage and his attitude was menacing.

of blood was checked none too soon, for Manuel's face had become pallid and his limbs were getting weak.

"Some one should notify his people," said the doctor, as he again gave his attention to the unconscious Enrique. "He may recover and he may die."

"I will tell them," said Manuel. "Have him taken to the hotel and I will let his people know."

He bent over the prostrate man, and his eyes filled with tears. Then his emotion overcame him, and he kissed Enrique on the cheek. "My brother, my brother," he exclaimed in a choked voice as he arose, "Mother of God, spare him!" He walked with uncertain step to the door, and then summoning all his strength, drew himself erect and stepped out onto the street.

Some minutes after the doctor said, referring to Manuel: "He seems to be weak, and it is possible he may not be able to reach home. Some of you men had better ride out and notify Don Antonio of what has happened."

Two Mexicans, who stood in great awe of Don Antonio, and yet were ever ready to serve him on account of his generosity, volunteered at once to get their horses.

Manuel was weaker than he seemed to be. He had lost a great deal of blood, and before he had reached the plaza, where he had left his horse, he was obliged to sit down several times. When at last he had reached the plaza, and while he was waiting to mount, two men passed him. They were talking of the affray in the saloon. It was too dark for Manuel to see their faces, but he could plainly hear what they said.

"That fellow is going to die," said one. "No hope for him," said the other. "He was dying when he left the place. Of course, the doctor didn't like to say so,

the sandy road. Manuel exerted all his strength and gained his feet. There was an expression of horror on his face as he gazed after the horsemen.

"Enrique dead!" he exclaimed. For some minutes he stood completely dazed leaning against his horse. His first impulse was to follow Don Antonio; then he thought of Alicia. She also knew that Enrique was dead. He would go to her and comfort her. No, she would not understand that her brother alone was responsible for the tragedy; she would blame only Manuel, her lover, her betrothed; in her eyes he would be a murderer. Emotional and passionate as she was by nature, in the first burst of mingled grief and wrath her love for him would perish, as tender vegetation shrivels and dies when touched by the hot breath of the Solano.

Such were the thoughts of Manuel as he put forth all his strength and mounted his impatient horse, which, obedient to the leading pressure of the rein against its neck and stung by the sharp harp of a spur, set off at a brisk gallop—not in the direction of Don Antonio's ranch, nor yet back to the town, but straight toward the high mesa to the north. It was with the feeling of a fugitive hotly pursued that Manuel urged on his horse; yet he was not fleeing from the law—to defend one's life is not a crime; not from the wrath of Don Antonio and the de Vargas kinsmen—his own kinship were equally numerous and powerful—but from his beloved Alicia, and he feared most in all the world—Alicia. He dared not look into her wet eyes and see them flash with hatred when she beheld him; he dared not touch her with hands stained with her brother's blood; with the knife strokes that defiled his life he had slain her love—and so he rode on toward the north, as a madman might



His Voice Rose Almost to a Scream.

but anyone could see that he didn't have any hope for the young fellow. He'll be dead before Salazar can get to Don Antonio's ranch."

"I wouldn't like to be in Salazar's place," said the first speaker. "If old Don Antonio don't shoot him, he'll get out his pistols and hang him!"

Manuel mounted his horse and the restive broncho dashed off in the direction of home. The rider could not long stand the rapid pace, and it required all his strength to check the speed of the wiry little beast. At the end of two miles Manuel had become so weak that he feared to allow the horse to proceed faster than a walk. At the end of the third mile he could scarcely keep his seat in the saddle, and for fear that he would fall from his horse he rode several paces off the road and dismounted beside an acacia. The tall grass that grew on the bank made a soft and restful couch. He soon felt that he was strong enough to resume the journey; it was not his intention to return to Don Antonio's; the conversation of the two men in the plaza recurred to him. Enrique was dying, perhaps, and he was loitering by the wayside. He must up and hurry on.

A faint sound reached his ears from the west—the direction in which he was traveling—the hoof-beats of a horse in a swift

have ridden pursued by the phantoms of a tortured brain.

Three years later a shepherd youth presented himself to the Provincial of the Society of Jesus at Santa Fe, and sought admittance to the order. He was vouched for by his parish priest, who told the aged head of the province that of all his acquaintances, this youth, Ramon Sanchez, was the most devoted. That long ago that Manuel Salazar, fleeing from the world, closed upon himself the door of a sacred retreat and felt that he was safe, not only for a time, but for eternity. In the brothers' college none were more studious, none more zealous than Ramon.

At the end of the long and severe course of training, the time came for Ramon to go back to the world. He returned to it even more willingly than he had left it; all the enthusiasm of his nature was aroused to do the will of God; he had lost a bride and found a mother in the church. The wound in his heart had healed; the sadness of his worldly sorrow had left him; and he looked upon life as with new eyes and entered again into the affairs of the world with a new and higher purpose.

Padre Ramon was assigned to the parish of El Rito among the class of people he loved—a community of shepherds, in the dress of poverty without realization of it, and consequently without the pangs that came to those who have nothing and desire much. And not gentler were these shepherds of four-footed beasts than the shepherds of men. He drew inspiration from their simple, uncomplaining lives; and were in his easy shoe the four-footed clover of sweet content."

Not quite a year had Padre Ramon been at El Rito when he received a summons from the provincial to come to Santa Fe in haste. Padre Ramon hesitated, and together he and the padre set out. It was night when they reached the city of Holy Faith. It was Pedro's first introduction into life outside of the little collection of mud huts he called his native place, and his attention was diverted from his duties by even such poor sights as the country youth may see in the New Mexican capital.

A fell was in progress in a house several streets distant from the Provincial's residence, and as Pedro and his mules were opposite the place the door of the house was suddenly opened to admit a new arrival. The mules were no more used to urban sounds than Pedro was to urban sights, and as the discordant strains of violins, guitars and horns smote their ears they plunged furiously to the other side of the street, one fore-wheel struck a large tree, the vehicle was upset, and the frightened animals ran wildly toward the center of the town. Pedro, an agile youth, alighted on his feet, and had sufficient presence of mind to think first of the padre. The good priest was lying upon his back in the middle of the road.

"Are you hurt, padre?" anxiously inquired the boy; but there was no response. Pedro tried to arouse the unconscious priest, but without success, and fearing that the good father had been killed he alarmed the dancers of the ball. The padre was carried to the Jesuit hospital near by. Beside the injury to his head, which had rendered him unconscious, the priest had a dislocated shoulder. It would be several days before he would be on his feet again.

While Padre Ramon was under the influence of opiates his shoulder was put in place, and he remained in a deep sleep for several hours. When he awoke, a nurse in the garb of a sister, was by his bedside.

"The doctor said you were to drink this when you awoke," she said, passing him a cooling draught. "I will send Sister Manuela to dress the wound on your head."

She went noiselessly from the room, and in a few moments Sister Manuela entered. She carried a fresh bandage in her hand, which she placed on a table, and then approached the bed.

"Am Sister Manuela," she said, "and I am come to dress the wound on your head. Does it give you much pain?" Padre Ramon was silent. His face was as white as the virgin sheet on which he

lay; his eyes were wide and staring; his lips moved without giving forth a sound.

Sister Manuela took a seat by the bedside, and stretched forth her hand to undo the bandage on his head.

"Alcira," he gasped, "do you not know me?"

A long indrawn breath, the trembling of lips and hands betokened the agitation of the man.

"Manuel, is it you?" she asked in a faint voice, sweeter in cadence than he had ever heard it.

"Oh, Alcira, my lost—"

"Stop, padre; be quiet," came the injunction in a calm voice; "you must not excite yourself; the doctor said that excitement might bring on delirium."

"Do you not fear to touch me?"

"No."

"Do you not hate me?"

"I never hated anyone," was the calm reply. "You must be quiet while I remove the bandage, and my trembling fingers touch the blood-stained cloth that bound the padre's head."

"You understand, you know that it was but to defend my life. I struck him down—I loved as a brother—killed him—"

"I fear for you, padre," said the gentle voice as Manuela unrolled the bandage; "the excitement is dangerous; be calm—Enrique lives."

With a violent motion that roughly tore the bandage from his wound, which bled afresh, Padre Ramon sat upright in the bed; his voice rose almost to a scream as he repeated the words: "Enrique lives; Mother of God, I thank Thee."

He stretched upward his arms and fell back upon the pillow in a swoon.

(To be concluded.)

A BIT OF HISTORY.

Germantown, Pa., Was Once the Capital of the Country.

A pupil in the boys' grammar school, on Lafayette street, Germantown, was asked by his teacher this week "When the first Congress occupied the Germantown Academy, located on West School lane?" It was a puzzle, of course, to the young scholar, who was at a loss to find anything in print verifying such an event. The facts, however, from which the false impression has frequently obtained are as follows: The Government of the United States was first inaugurated in New York in 1789, but by act of Congress Philadelphia was made the capital of the nation from 1790 until 1800. In 1793 the yellow fever became epidemic in this city, and it was in October of that year that the governor of Pennsylvania asked the board of trustees to accommodate the House of Assembly, and a similar request for quarters came from Congress.

At the November meeting following the board proffered to Congress the choice of the school buildings, but there is no minute evidence to show that Congress accepted the generous offer. At this time Washington resided in Germantown, and the town was spoken of as the government place of the State and also of the United States. Jefferson, then Secretary of State, and Randolph, Attorney General, occupied the building, some years ago torn down to extend the site on which the national bank now stands, at Main street and School lane 80, with Washington, Thomas Jefferson and John Randolph residing in Germantown, it is not strange that the conclusion should be formed that Congress was in session at the time. Although the Germantown academy never had the honor of accommodating Congress, a few years later, in 1792, when the yellow fever made its appearance again in this city, the banks of North America and of Pennsylvania did find a temporary place of safety in the old academy—Philadelphia Record.

A CASE OF BLUFF.

This Fatal Spirit of Obstinacy Caused Two Men to Be Snowed Under.

The last three miles of the road leading up to the Alhambra mine ran through Dead Man's Gap, which was a narrow valley in the mountains, and at least once every winter there was sure to be a snow slide which buried the trail from ten to twenty feet deep. We were going from Franklin City with the pack mules, one day in January, when a chinook wind was melting the snow, and in the narrow part of the valley we came across two men who had camped down within ten rods of each other. They were typical men of the border—prospector, miners and hangers-on, but meeting them where we did was such a surprise that the colonel halted to say:

"You men must be more than fools to camp down here. If there's a snow slide you'll be buried twenty feet deep at the first rush."

"Stranger," replied one of the men, as he ran his eye up the mountain side, "I've bin expectin' a snow slide every night since noon yesterday, but it's not for me to make the first move. It's a game of bluff between me and that galoot over there, and I won't give in to him."

"Stranger," said the other man, as he advanced a pace or two, "I was comin' down this pass yesterday, when I met that old critter 'goin' up. I was in a hurry to git along and so was he, but as we met he sorter grinned at me and kinder flung out that I was afeared. I kinder flung back that no mortal varmint on the face of this earth could bluff me, and he got off his horse and camped down."

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LOST OPPORTUNITY.

NYLLA-VESTIGIA-RETRORSV.
By EDITH M. THOMAS.

"There is a nest of thrushes in the glen. When we come back we'll see the glad young things." He said. We came not by that way again. And time and thrushes fare on eager wings.

"You rose"—she smiled—"but no; when we return I'll pluck it then." 'Twas on a summer day. The ashes of the rose in Autumn's urn Lie hidden well. We came not back that way.

We do not pass the selfsame way again, Or passing by that way, no thing we find snow up there ready to fall and bury this past!"

"Just so," replied No. 1, "but I kin sit here as long as he kin." "And I'll see it out if it takes all winter," added the other.

The colored argued and appealed, but neither would be the first to give way. They had gone in for a game of bluff, and their pride was at stake. When it was seen that talking would do no good, we rose on our left hand, and looking back at the next turn of the trail, we saw them seated in their blankets facing each other and waiting for a sign of weakness.

A mile higher up the pack-saddle of one of the mules turned, and the animal floundered about and went off the path and down the slope. A great mass of snow went with him, and in a minute a slide was started. Away it went, booming, spreading out and gathering force every second, and while we stood looking on there was a rumbling as of thunder, a crash that could be heard for miles, and Dead Man's Pass was filled from end to end with snow and rocks and splintered trees.

"Bluffin' said right when you are bluffin' again a man," said the colored, as we rode on, "but when it comes to bluffin' a snow slide, jest count me out and call me a cawfish."

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